

## Analysis And Evaluation

### Summary

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial acquires significance from its period of design and construction earlier in this century, 1934-1943. Because of its uninterrupted use as a commemorative landscape since that time, the memorial landscape maintains integrity in many areas. There is high integrity in the characteristics of natural systems, spatial organization, land use, topography, buildings and structures, and views and vistas. Characteristics that retain a moderate level of integrity are circulation and vegetation. More research is needed to determine integrity in the area of small-scale features.

**Location:** The major features that define the landscape are intact from the period of significance. The memorial with the statue of Jefferson, the Tidal Basin and cherry trees all retain their original locations.

**Design:** The site and its structures essentially retain their original design. There has been some loss of integrity, resulting from the reconstruction of the north plaza in 1970, changes to the planting plan, and alterations in surfacing materials. Despite these changes, the design of the memorial and its landscape retains a large portion of its historic integrity, and planned projects will restore some historically significant characteristics lost since 1943.

**Setting:** The landscape surrounding the Jefferson Memorial has retained its integrity of setting. The character of the place is similar to the period of significance, with a few incursions. For example, additional highways and bridges to the south, increased air traffic to Reagan National Airport, the closing of the parking lot, and the addition of trees inside the circular drive has had a negative, albeit minor, impact on the setting.

**Materials:** The character-defining materials of the memorial are relatively intact. Some changes have been made in the paving of the north plaza and circular drive, but these were addressed in the restoration project of 1999-2000 [see circulation section]. Some original vegetation remains on the site, and to some degree the original planting plan has been respected by replacement-in-kind.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the Jefferson Memorial maintains high integrity from its construction.

**Feeling:** The Jefferson Memorial maintains the feeling of the commemorative setting that existed at its dedication in 1943. Its visual relationship to the monumental core of the Federal city has been maintained, as well as the relationship to the Tidal Basin and Potomac. The negative impacts noted in Setting have also influenced the feeling, but are also minor impacts here.

**Association:** The memorial retains its association with the commemoration of Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States, for his contributions in the founding of our nation. The characteristics that convey the memorial's link to this important person are intact.

The majority of the information in this entry comes from the "Thomas Jefferson Memorial: Landscape Overview" by Sally Prothero and Audrey Tepper, completed by the National Park Service Denver Service Center in 1996. Information has been added on the period up to 1998 in an attempt to update the landscape study to the present. All information pertaining to the Rehabilitation of the Support Facilities, scheduled for completion in 1998, and the Restoration for the Entrance Steps and Plaza, scheduled for 1999-2000, comes from an interview with Stephen Lorenzetti, National Capital Parks - Central, Chief of

the Division of Resource Management. The interview was held on October 2, 1998, with follow-up clarification in a telephone call on Oct. 15, 1998. An update interview was held in January 2001.

## **Landscape Characteristics And Features**

### **Buildings And Structures**

(The following is paraphrased on the National Register Nomination for East and West Potomac Parks by Robinson and Associates, Inc.)

The Jefferson Memorial (Contributing), located on the southeast shore of the Tidal Basin, was originally designed by John Russell Pope in 1937. Pope's design was later modified by his successor firm belonging to principals Otto R. Eggers and Daniel P. Higgins. The memorial, modeled after the Roman Pantheon, was constructed between 1939 and 1943, and was dedicated in 1943. A circular open-air structure, the Jefferson Memorial features a shallow dome, a circular peripheral colonnade composed of 26 unfluted Ionic columns, 12 additional Ionic columns supporting the north portico, and 4 identical columns in each of memorial's four monumental openings. The memorial is constructed of white Imperial Danby marble from Vermont, and it rests upon a series of granite and marble-stepped terraces. A flight of granite and marble stairs and platforms, flanked by granite buttresses, leads from the Tidal Basin. The stairs rise to an octastyle portico with a triangular pediment, which features a sculpture by Adolph A. Weinman, depicting the five members of the drafting committee of the Declaration of Independence submitting their report to Congress. A dentiled cornice with egg-and-dart molding surrounds the pediment, below which is a plain frieze.

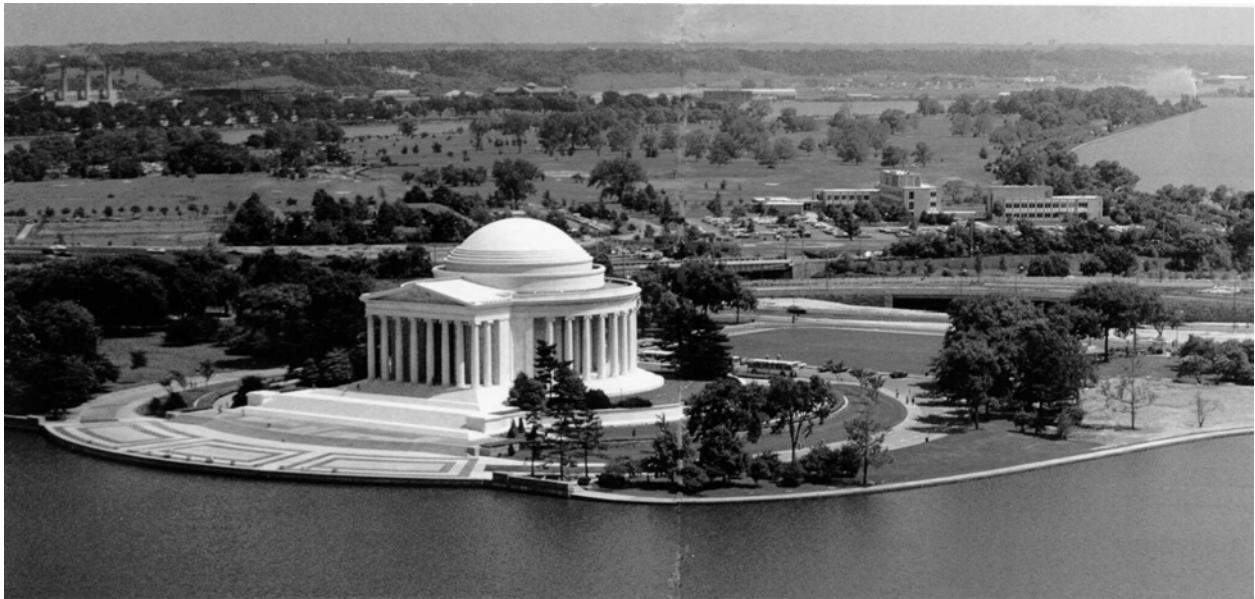
The interior of the Jefferson Memorial is constructed of white Georgia marble with an axed finish, and the floor is made of pink Tennessee marble. Rudolph Evans' bronze statue of Jefferson stands centered in the chamber on a black Minnesota granite pedestal, which is inscribed with the dates of Jefferson's birth and death (1743-1826). The statue depicts Jefferson in mid-life holding the Declaration of Independence in his left hand. Four quotations from Jefferson's writings are carved into the walls of the memorial. An excerpt from the Declaration of Independence, the document for which Jefferson is best known, is located on the southwest wall. The southeast wall features a statements on the evolution of law and the Constitution, which was taken from a letter written to Samuel Kercheval in 1816. The northwest wall is inscribed with a combination of six quotations taken primarily from Jefferson's "1786 Notes on Virginia" and "Summary Views," which illustrate his beliefs in the evils of slavery and the need to educate the masses. On the northwest wall is a quote from the "Act of Religious Freedom," which was adopted in 1779 and eliminated the state church in Virginia; this quote expresses Jefferson's views on freedom of religion. A fifth quote, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man," taken from an 1800 letter from Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, is engraved on the frieze encircling the memorial's interior. The frieze is topped by a dentiled cornice and a massive Indiana limestone dome. The dome's interior is divided into two parts; the lower section has a coffered surface containing lights which illuminate the statue, and the upper section has a smooth, uninterrupted surface.

A few alterations have been made to the Jefferson Memorial since its dedication in 1947. Two phases of work were performed in preparation for the nation's Bicentennial. In 1974-75, work was performed to repair minor structural defects. In 1975-76 repairs were made to benefit visitors, particularly the elderly and the handicapped, including heating, ventilating, and air conditioning repairs in enclosed portions of the memorial; providing toilet facilities; installing an elevator; and plumbing and electrical repairs. In addition, a small gift shop was installed in the northwest section of the memorial in what used to be a

storage room; and a handicapped-access ramp, leading from the northwest side to a sidewalk on the western side of the memorial, was also installed. In the early 1990s, a team led by Einhorn Yaffee Prescott and Hartman-Cox Architects worked with the National Park Service on the first comprehensive repair effort at the memorial (Robinson and Associates, Inc., Section 7, 16-17).

The only other structure on the memorial grounds is the refreshment kiosk that houses the food concession southwest of the memorial at East Basin Drive. Typical of those built throughout the Mall just prior to the Bicentennial celebration, they are octagonal structures with windows on 5 sides, and tent-like copper, standing seam roofs. This one is constructed primarily of tan enamel coated metal. (see photograph)

Due to its continuous use as a memorial, the structure, which retains its original materials and design, has high integrity. Only the refreshment kiosk is a non-contributing structure.



*The memorial setting, circa 1980*



*The refreshment kiosk southeast of the memorial is a non-contributing structure.*

Characteristic Feature	Type Of Contribution	LCS Structure Name	IDLCS Number	Structure Number
Information Kiosk on south	Non-Contributing			
Refreshment Kiosk	Non-Contributing			
Seawall	Contributing			
Stylobate Wall and Terrace Walls that create stylobate and terrace mall levels	Contributing			
Thomas Jefferson Memorial	Contributing	Jefferson Memorial - Res. 332	00733	33216001

## Circulation

### Vehicular Circulation

Access to the memorial is predominantly by vehicle, either by car, bus or Tourmobile, a National Park Service concession-operated sightseeing service. Public transportation is limited, with no bus service to the memorial and the nearest Metro station at the Smithsonian stop, a fifteen-minute walk away. Commercial bus tours to the memorial are numerous, especially visiting school groups during the school year. When the parking lot is open, barring closings due to security issues, most visitors to the Jefferson Memorial arrive via the approach roads to the parking lot to the south, where they park or are dropped off. Those roads are constructed of asphalt over concrete, and have granite curbs.

The issue of adequate parking has been under discussion since the memorial was built. Olmsted's plan, No. 778 ("Rider for Plan No. 702", Showing Alternative Location for Approach Roads and Their Flanking Trees), showed a future area for parking southeast of the memorial, and the same area to the east of the grass rectangle was revised in 1943 and 1949 by the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission and approved by the National Park Service. (Prothero and Tepper, 93)

The circular drive and plaza, originally designed for vehicular use, are now meant to be used exclusively by pedestrians. Despite the "No Entry" signs and gates at the south side of the circular drive, vehicles are often parked on the plaza. They are usually National Park Service vehicles, delivery vans, and Park Police cars and motorcycles. (Prothero and Tepper, 95) The metal gates, which are not compatible with the other design features of the memorial's exterior, will be replaced in the Restoration of the Entrance Steps and Plaza, scheduled for 1999-2000. (Lorenzetti, 10/2/98)

### Pedestrian Circulation

Some pedestrians arrive at the memorial from the east, coming from the paddle boat rental area around the Tidal Basin; others come from the Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) memorial located on the west. The FDR Memorial also brings many pedestrians to the west edge of the Tidal Basin, where they have an excellent view across the water to the Jefferson Memorial. The path adjacent to the Tidal Basin on the west side is made up of sections of asphalt and concrete; the one to the east is largely asphalt. On both sides the paths abut the concrete cap on the seawall.

When the parking lot is open, most visitors to the Jefferson Memorial walk parallel to the approach roads on sidewalks of exposed aggregate concrete patched with asphalt. The majority tends to walk around the west side of the memorial. Some take the asphalt circular roadway, usually stopping to admire the vista north to the White House, and then climb the north steps to enter the chamber. The lowest set of the north entrance steps is made of granite; while those closer to the interior of the memorial are marble. Some visitors, including disabled visitors, take the ramp on the south side to the terrace mall level and around the memorial to the west. From there they then climb the north stairs, or enter the building and take the elevator to the chamber level. (Lorenzetti, 10/2/98)

The Memorial was made accessible to people with disabilities in 1975 as part of a project to commemorate America's Bicentennial. The ramp at the south was constructed between two planters, and an elevator was installed.

Originally visitors accessed restrooms through the east and west basement doors. The east door was subsequently closed, and all facilities were reached through the west basement door, focusing the

majority of visitor services to the west side. There, a ramp was constructed in place of the steps to make the facilities accessible.

The construction completed in 1998 made the facilities accessible from both the east and west doors. The enlarged restrooms are located near the center of the lower level, not in their original locations near the doors, and a family restroom was added. Both east and west doors access the upgraded facilities, and a new elevator improves accessibility to the chamber level as well as the lower level. (Lorenzetti, 10/2/98, 1/2001)

Visitors regularly visit the refreshment kiosk to the southwest of the memorial, often while waiting for the Tourmobile. The nearby rectangle of grass is rarely used other than as a foreground setting for the memorial. Most visitors choose to sit under the trees and admire the views across the Tidal Basin and escape the heat from the summer's sun and the constant noise and sight of the cars to the south. (Prothero and Tepper, 93-96)

#### Roadway, Plaza, and Steps

Due to the continual settlement since the memorial's construction, sections of the circular roadway were located at a considerably lower grade than the main plaza. In order for the plaza to meet the circular road section a "transition section" had to be constructed at the time of the plaza construction (1970s) as can be seen in "1995 Surfacing & Path Layout." (Prothero and Tepper, 124) In the work completed in 1999, the circular drive was raised and resurfaced in aggregate concrete in a color to mimic the original asphalt. (Lorenzetti, 10/2/98; 1/2001)

The current north plaza was installed in 1970. It is a multicolored plaza of exposed aggregate concrete and regular concrete colored a red-brown. It has been paved with several colors of concrete, and some patches have graffiti in them. The plaza forms the base of the front steps and replaced the original macadam road with curbing, gutters, and sidewalk, and the small concrete plaza. Thereafter vehicles were prohibited from driving around the memorial. (Prothero and Tepper, 124)

In the 1999-2000 project for the Restoration of the Entrance Steps and Plaza, a number of repairs to the circulation system were made. The north plaza was redone in the same colored aggregate concrete as the circular drive. The design more closely resembles the original design, but has a flush surface. The original curb-line of the circular driveway was marked with granite pavers. The same project addressed the main steps at the north, which were out of alignment in places, and have now been reset and repaired. The granite steps along the edge of the Tidal Basin leading to the northwest corner of the plaza have been repaired, and the asphalt ramps bypassing both sets of steps adjacent to the Tidal Basin have been widened and resurfaced. (Lorenzetti, 10/2/98, 9/30/2000, 1/2001)

#### Other Sidewalks and Paths

A sidewalk parallels East Basin Drive for most of its length within the memorial grounds. It is made of exposed aggregate concrete with a granite curb, and to the east is heavily used by bicyclists to get to the bicycle lane of the 14th Street Bridge.

Several informal paths existed on the site in 1998, that did not exist when the memorial was dedicated. To the west, an asphalt path added in 1986 runs from the Tidal Basin, starting approximately half way to the Inlet Bridge, across the lawn to the northwest corner of the parking area. On the east, four asphalt

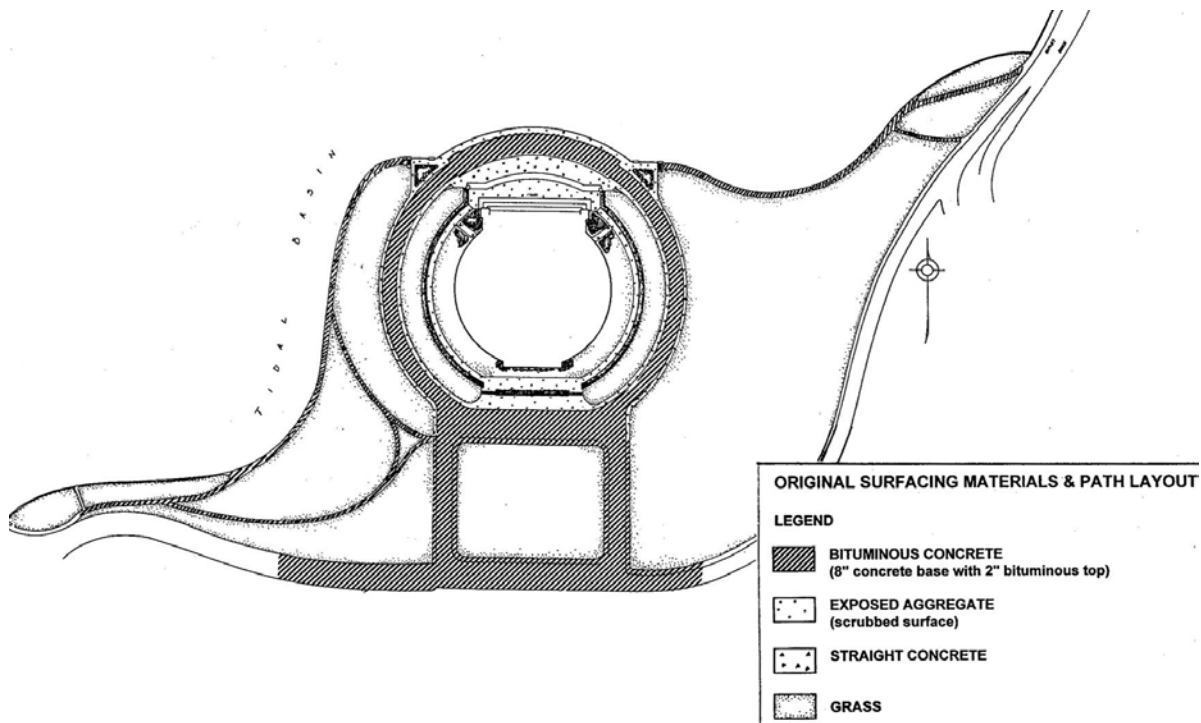
paths merge before crossing the Outlet Bridge. One path from the circular drive was added in 1986. The others, added later, include one from the southeast corner of the parking lot, and two from the Tidal Basin. Along the edge of the Tidal Basin to the east of the memorial, one well developed social trail runs behind the first row of cherry trees, and seems to represent a bypass created when the regular sidewalk is clogged with pedestrians.

## Materials

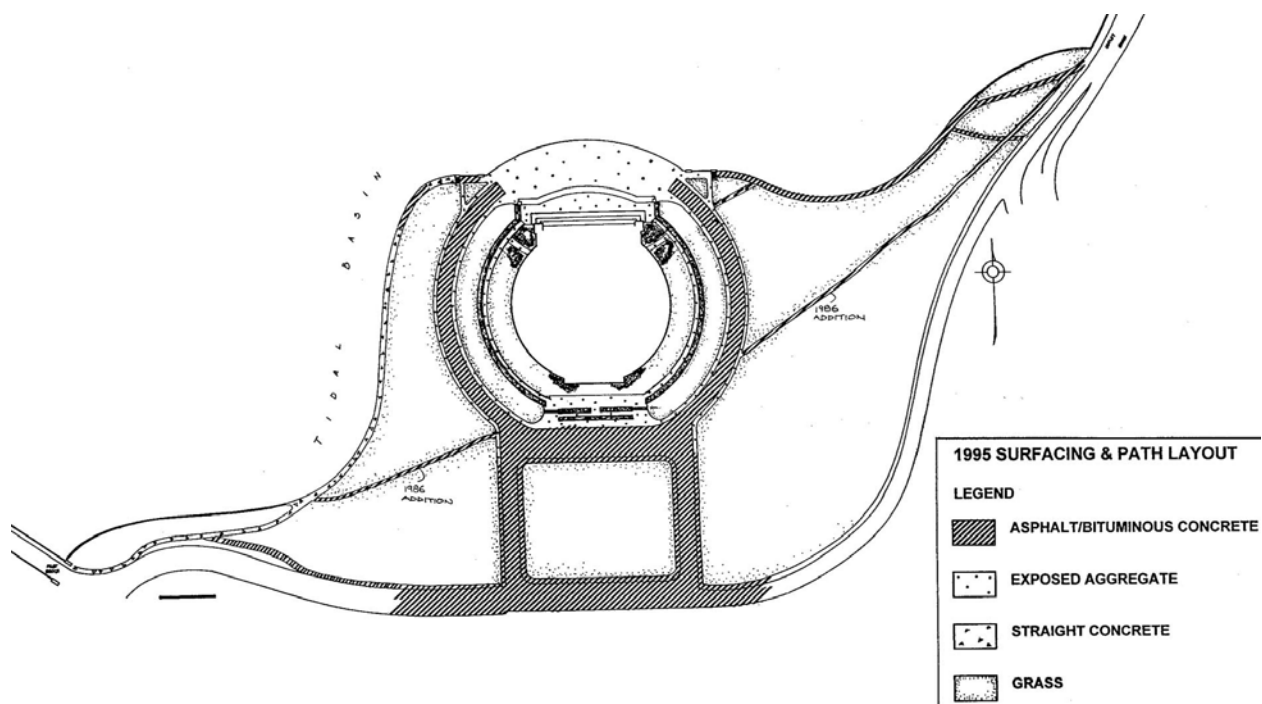
Surfacing material differs throughout the study area. Both concrete and asphalt repairs are prolific on the site. The variety of surfacing materials on the sidewalks, paths, roads and plazas creates a patchwork effect of different colors and textures, detracting from the landscape setting and the grandeur of the memorial itself. (Prothero and Tepper, 124)

## Integrity

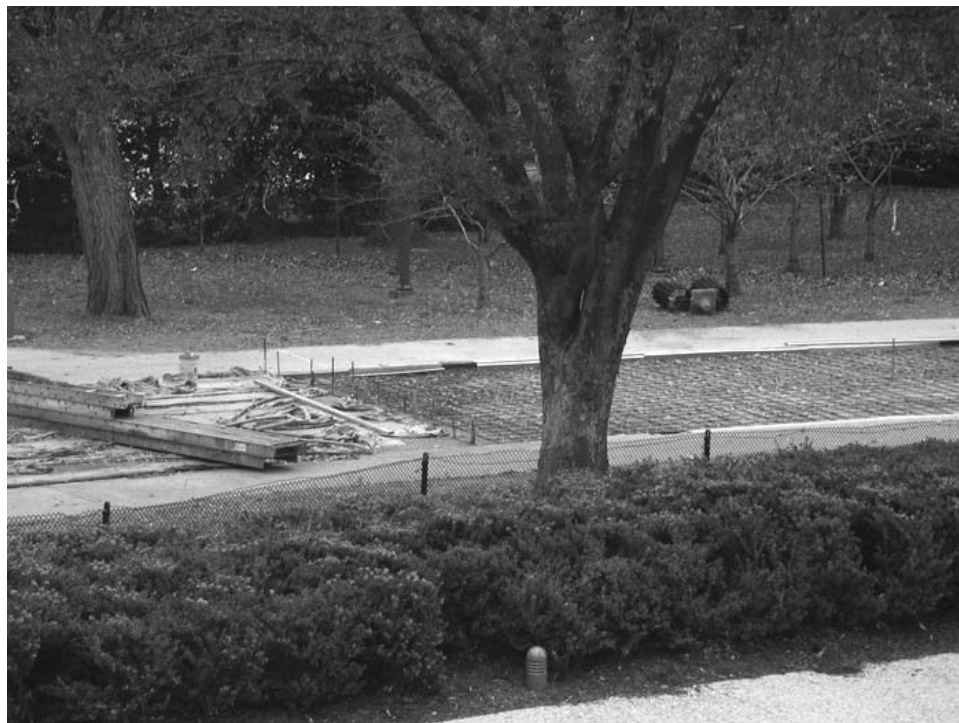
Considering circulation on the site as a whole, pedestrian circulation has retained integrity of use in the years since the construction. The materials and layout of the plaza have changed with succeeding renovation projects, and represent a loss of integrity. The circular drive was originally meant for vehicular use, which is no longer permitted, so this change of use represents a further loss of integrity. However the 1999 work that replaced the 1970s plaza design with a design and materials that more closely relate to the original has assisted in restoring integrity to this portion of the site. Other vehicular circulation at the approach roads and parking area retains historic integrity.



*This drawing indicates the original materials and layout of the circulation system on the memorial grounds.*



*This 1995 survey shows that some changes in surfacing materials had taken place since the completion of the memorial in 1943, and that the layout of the circulation system had been adjusted in the intervening years.*



*Reconstruction of circular terrace roadway, 2000*





*Parking lot to south of memorial, 2000*



*Pedestrian walk (facing east) immediately south of Jefferson Memorial, 2000*

<b>Characteristic Feature</b>	<b>Type Of Contribution</b>	<b>LCS Structure Name</b>	<b>IDLCS Number</b>	<b>Structure Number</b>
Approach Roadways and Parking Lot to South	Contributing			
Circular Roadway and Sidewalks	Contributing			
North Plaza	Contributing			
North Steps to Memorial	Contributing			
Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths East of Memorial	Non-Contributing			
Pedestrian Walk along Tidal Basin Edge	Contributing			
Pedestrian Walk around Memorial on Terrace Mall Level	Contributing			
Pedestrian Walk from West Tidal Basin to Northeast Corner of Parking Lot	Contributing			
Ramps around Steps in Walk at Edge of Tidal Basin	Non-Contributing			

### **Constructed Water Features**

Although the Tidal Basin is integral to the siting and the visitor's experience of the memorial, the water is not considered part of the Jefferson Memorial grounds, but part of West Potomac Park.

## Land Use

With the establishment of the Federal city in 1791 and subsequent growth of the city, much of the tree cover was removed from the surrounding area. The Potomac became silted to such an extent that dredging was necessary. River transport became channelled as the land increased when the silt was removed from the river bed and dumped at the edge. After dredging was sufficiently completed to enable river activities to continue, the newly created land was left to become overgrown with native vegetation. In total, 739 acres of land was reclaimed from the river to the south of the Washington Monument grounds. Despite claims from private business that it should be sold off for development, the United States Congress passed Senate Bill 3,037 on March 3, 1897 which established that the entire area, including the Tidal Basin, formerly known as Potomac Flats, should become a public park. With increased access around the newly reclaimed land, the public started to use the area for recreation, especially riding, driving and parading around the newly created Tidal Basin. A boating hut provided additional recreational opportunities, and areas for fishing and swimming, such as the bathing beach adjacent to the future memorial site, became popular.

Swimming in the Tidal Basin continued until about 1925 when it was stopped by the newly-merged Office of Public Buildings and Grounds and Office of Public Parks of the National Capital. The reason for this was twofold; firstly, because of the health risks caused by the debris which floated in the Tidal Basin through the Inlet Bridge and second, due to the racist policies which limited the use of the beach to whites only. Rather than allow access to the beach for everyone, it was closed and returned to its former condition, a natural waters edge without sand. The liquid chlorine plant which was situated under the Inlet Bridge, supposedly to make the water safe, was no longer necessary.

In 1928, after the swimming was gone, a new boathouse with public rest rooms was built at the end of 17th Street. The site of the former beach was occupied by baseball fields and tennis courts.

Since the memorial's dedication in 1943, the grounds regularly used for festivals, public events, and ceremonies, and it is the destination for thousands of tourists visiting the Capital City. It ranks third among the monuments in terms of popularity; as many as two million visitors pass through the structure each year. At one time military bands gave free concerts at the Memorial, using the plaza as a stage and the steps for seating. Small groups still play there on occasion. Wreath-laying ceremonies are held annually on April 13th, the anniversary of Jefferson's birth.

The Annual Cherry Blossom Festival has been held at the site each spring since before the memorial was erected and continues to be a highlight in the calendar of events. The ceremonial Japanese lantern associated with the festival is located just off Independence Avenue. (Prothero and Tepper, 78-80)

Some special events that were once held at the Jefferson Memorial no longer occur. Fish Day was a popular event organized by the National Park Service, which attracted several hundred children to the Tidal Basin. In recent years it has been moved to the pond at Constitution Gardens. Other small events such as informal races held on Wednesdays by federal employees are no longer organized regularly.

Another land use that has changed is vehicle parking. In the summer of 1998 the parking lot to the south was temporarily closed due to security considerations arising from bombings of American embassies overseas. The parking was reopened by 2001. It is not clear whether parking lot closures will occur again.

The site continues to be used informally for strolling, picnicking and other recreation, with the greatest

intensity of use in the spring when the cherry trees are in blossom. It frequently serves as the backdrop for weddings and other photographs. Wedding ceremonies are also held on the west lawn. More active recreation on the site includes jogging and bicycling, and the eastern approach to the 14th Street bridge bicycle lane crosses the memorial grounds. The area is also used for numerous races, particularly in the spring and fall. In 1998 the Cherry Blossom 10-Miler attracted approximately 5,000 runners, and the Marine Corps Marathon with approximately 20,000 runners often goes by the memorial.

Despite the addition of recreation to the memorial landscape since its period of significance, the land use maintains high historic integrity as a commemorative landscape. (The above adapted from Prothero and Tepper.)



*After the park was created, the future memorial site became a bathing beach until swimming was banned in 1925.*



*After swimming was outlawed, the area around the Tidal Basin was used for baseball fields and tennis courts as seen in the center and lower right corner of this 1930 photograph*

## Natural Systems And Features

The Jefferson Memorial is located in the Piedmont area of the mid-Atlantic region. The climate in the Washington D.C. area is temperate and in planting zone 7. The site location is adjacent to the Potomac River, and thus in the Potomac watershed.

The Jefferson Memorial is situated within a completely engineered landscape, as a result of manipulation of the natural environment. The landform restructuring was originally carried out for purely practical reasons, namely the control of silt to enable the passage of river transport.

On March 3, 1897, legislation was passed establishing the area of the Tidal Basin and former flats as a public park for the recreation and pleasure of the people. Later the land was modified to satisfy aesthetic considerations in the formation of the memorial site. The silt that was dredged created the new river's edge and what was ultimately to become East and West Potomac Parks and the setting for the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The species which would have grown on the banks and the flood plain of the Potomac before reclamation would have included, willow (*Salix*), bulrush (*Scirpus*), cattail (*Typha*), lizard's tail (*Saururus*), wild rice (*Zizania*), and other aquatic and bog plants. None of these plants exist in the vicinity today, due to the hard edge of the Tidal Basin wall and depth of water. ( adapted from Prothero and Tepper, 76)

Due to the continuous use of the landscape as a memorial site since its period of significance, the natural systems maintain historic integrity.

